



PRESS RELEASE
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ATTORNEY GENERAL JOHN ASHCROFT PRESENTS AWARD TO
JAMES KLINDT, FIRST ASSISTANT TO THE U.S. ATTORNEY
FOR THE MIDDLE DISTRICT OF FLORIDA

Today in the nation's Capitol, the Department of Justice held its 20th Annual Executive Office for United States Attorneys Director's Awards Ceremony in which award recipients received recognition for their excellence in law enforcement. Recipients include Assistant United States Attorneys, litigation and information technology support personnel, as well as others who have made outstanding contributions in federal, state and local law enforcement.

James Klindt, First Assistant to United States Attorney Paul I. Perez, was recognized for his successful prosecution in the investigation of police corruption within the Jacksonville, Florida Sheriff's Office. One of the Jacksonville Sheriff's officers convicted was Karl T. Waldon, also a former Orlando Police officer. Waldon is now serving a life sentence for the murder and robbery of Sami Safar, the owner of a convenience store in Jacksonville. On July 3, 1998 Safar was murdered in the backseat of Waldon's police cruiser during the robbery of \$50,000.

“Those honored today are shepherds of justice dedicated to the enhancement of liberty through the law,” said Attorney General John Ashcroft at today’s ceremony. “You have kept America safe from terrorism, brought violent crime to an historic 30-year low, forged new relationships of trust and cooperation, and most of all, protected and defended the Constitutional rights and liberties of all Americans. Thank you for your leadership and for your dedicated service.”

Although terrorism is the top priority of the Department of Justice, the Department has continued its mission to enforce all of our nation’s laws, including prosecuting environmental crime, civil rights violations, and drug crimes, as well as representing our client agencies, conducting civil enforcement, seeking asset forfeiture and assisting victims of crime. Crime has dropped to a 30-year low as the Department has employed tough tools and tough penalties against criminals who have victimized the innocent. The Department has implemented President Bush’s Project Safe Neighborhoods’ initiative, increasing federal gun prosecutions by 36 percent, and reducing gun crimes so dramatically that last year only 7 percent of crimes were committed with a firearm -- the lowest ever. The war on drugs has been reinvigorated and the country is celebrating record lows in student drug use while government seizures of heroin have doubled in two years. In addition, the Department-led Corporate Fraud Task Force has restored integrity to the marketplace by cracking down on companies and corporate executives who abused the trust of their employees and investors. Last year, the Department collected a record \$2.1 billion in fraud settlements against the United States, and collected a record \$202 million in civil penalties from polluters. The Department developed the government’s first ban on racial profiling by federal law enforcement, successfully resolved decades-long civil rights investigations, and worked to bring communities together in a way that respects the rights of all Americans. The Civil Rights Division charged more defendants for criminal bias-motivated civil rights violations in 2001-2002 than in 1999-2000, and hate crimes are down almost 25 percent from last year.

U.S. Attorney Paul I. Perez, who also attended today's award ceremony, stated, "Jim Klindt is one of the finest trial attorneys within the Department of Justice. Today's award is confirmation of his dedication, tenacity and commitment to bringing law breakers to justice."

Klindt grew up in Orlando, Florida where his parents still reside. He graduated from the Florida State University College of Law in 1986. He served as a law clerk for the Honorable Howell W. Melton, United States District Judge, from September 1986 to September 1988. Mr. Klindt joined the United States Attorney's Office for the Middle District of Florida in December 1988. In December 1999, he was named Deputy Managing Assistant United States Attorney for the Jacksonville office. In March 2002, U.S. Attorney Paul I. Perez chose Mr. Klindt to serve as his First Assistant U.S. Attorney. During his more than fourteen years as a federal prosecutor, Mr. Klindt has focused on drug and public corruption cases.

The Executive Office for United States Attorneys provides oversight, general executive assistance and direction to the 94 United States Attorneys' offices around the country.